

# The Apostle Matthias

August 9, 2023

**GOSPEL:** Luke 10:16-21

**EPISTLE:** Acts 1:12-17, 21-26

## Matthias, the Oldest of the Twelve Apostles

Matthias was born in Bethlehem<sup>1</sup> of the Tribe of Judah and was originally one of the Seventy. In his younger days, Matthias had been a student of Simeon<sup>2</sup> the Host of God, who held the baby Jesus in his arms at the time of Mary's purification (Luke 2:22-28), which was forty days after childbirth for a male child (Leviticus 12). Simeon prophesied at this time concerning both Jesus and Mary (Luke 2:33-35), and Simeon's song of departure (i.e. death), called the Nunc Dimittis (Latin: *let us depart*), has been used as a dismissal in the Church ever since. Since Simeon died shortly after the birth of Christ, Matthias would have to be one of the older Apostles, and he would have been at least 20 years older than Jesus.

Matthias' age and maturity were probably a factor in his being proposed, along with Joseph called Barsabas, to replace Judas (Acts 1:23). Joseph Barsabas, also called Judah (Acts 15:22) and Justus (Acts 1:23), was Jesus' older stepbrother, and was a prophet and one of the leading men among the Jerusalem Church in 48 AD at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:22,32). Both men were among the oldest and most mature of the Seventy.

As a student of Simeon, Matthias would have been very familiar with Simeon's teaching and his hopes and dreams, which included "waiting for the Consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25), meaning the Advent of the Messiah. He also knew that "It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26). When the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, and he spoke so eloquently prophesying about Jesus, Matthias was probably also present, since students usually accompanied their teachers. This was such a dramatic event that Matthias knew that Jesus was the Messiah from the time He was a baby. Matthias was certainly aware of the Flight into Egypt, which occurred when Jesus was about one year old. And in addition to his teacher, Simeon, Matthias was also waiting for Jesus' advent to the world. Other sources state<sup>3</sup> that during the 30 years that Jesus was growing up, Matthias led a God-pleasing life, following strictly the path outlined in the commandments of God.

When he was proposed as a replacement for Judas, he certainly fit the requirements as given by Peter. "Therefore of these men, who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to the day He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His Resurrection" (Acts 1:21-22). Matthias and Joseph had both been around long before the baptism of John, even from the time Jesus was born.

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After the Lord's birth, Simeon died and Matthias lived a quiet life keeping the commandments of God. When Jesus began his public ministry, Matthias, who remembered the

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<sup>1</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 9.

<sup>2</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 9.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 233.

things his teacher had said about Jesus thirty years earlier (Luke 2:27-35), was immediately receptive and was chosen as one of the 70.

### **Matthias' Selection to Replace Judas**

The selection of Matthias over Joseph was “by lot” (Acts 1:26). This was much more than just a roll of dice or a draw of straws. First they prayed that the Lord, “who knows the hearts of all, would show which of these two You have chosen” (Acts 1:24). Then they cast the lots. This procedure was similar to what the High Priest did with the Urim and Thummim, which he carried against his chest every time he went into the Holy Place (Numbers 27:21, Exodus 28:30, Ezra 2:63). Just as the High Priest customarily used the Urim and Thummim to discern the Lord’s Will, so did the Apostles.

The words used to describe Matthias’ role are significant. Quoting a Psalm of David (Psalm 109:8), Peter stated that Matthias was taking Judas’ office of Bishop (Greek: *episkopen*).

Tertullian noted<sup>4</sup> that the sole authority that the Apostles had for selecting Matthias to replace Judas came from their interpretation of one of David’s Psalms.

“Having, on the authority of a prophecy, which occurs in a psalm of David, chosen Matthias by lot as the twelfth, into the place of Judas, they obtained the promised power of the Holy Spirit for the gift of miracles and of utterance. And after first bearing witness to the faith in Jesus Christ throughout Judea, and founding churches (there), they next went forth into the world and preached the same doctrine of the same faith to the nations”.

John Chrysostom noted<sup>5</sup> that Matthias’ election was done before the Giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, that it was divinely ordered. Chrysostom likened the bringing forward teachers and priests for ministry in the Church in his day to be a similar circumstance to the selection of Matthias:

“The office of a Teacher and that of a Priest is of great dignity, and to bring forward one that is worthy requires a divine election. So it was of old, and so it is now, when we make a choice without human passion, not looking to any temporal consideration, swayed neither by friendship, nor enmity. For though we are not partakers of so great a measure of the Spirit as they, yet a good purpose is sufficient to draw unto us the election of God. For the Apostles, when they elected Matthias, had not yet received the Holy Spirit, but having committed the matter to prayer, they chose him into the number of the Apostles. For they looked not to human friendships. And so now too it ought to be with us. In this way Timothy also was chosen. When Paul ordained him, as he himself says in his Epistle, ‘Neglect not the gift that is in you’ (1 Timothy 4:14). Therefore to elevate him, and prepare him to be sober and watchful, he reminds him by whom he was chosen and ordained, as if he had said, ‘God has chosen you. He gave you your commission, you were not made by human vote. Do not therefore abuse or bring into disgrace the appointment of God’. When again he speaks of a charge, which implies something burdensome, he adds, ‘This charge I commit to you, son Timothy’ (1 Timothy 1:18). He charges him as his own son, as like a father. The ‘committing’, however, implies that it is to be diligently kept, and that it is not our own. For we did not obtain it for ourselves, but God conferred it upon us; and not it only, but also ‘faith and a good conscience’ (1 Timothy 1:19). What He has given us then, let us keep”.

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<sup>4</sup> Tertullian, The Prescription Against Heretics, II, i, 20

<sup>5</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, V, 1

Chrysostom continued<sup>6</sup>

“And his bishopric let another take; that is, his office, his priesthood. So that this, he says, is not my counsel, but His who has foretold these things. For he brings the Prophet as a witness. ‘Of these men which have accompanied us’ (Acts 1:21), he makes it their business too, in order that the matter might not become an object of strife, and they might not fall into contention about it. For if the Apostles themselves once contended about this, much more might others do it later. Peter defers the decision to the whole body, thereby both making the elected objects of reverence and himself keeping clear of all invidiousness with regard to the rest. For such occasions often give rise to great evils”.

“Once it was clear that some one must be appointed, and he brought the prophet as witness, the question was from among what persons should he be selected? To say the worthy must present themselves would have been to insult the others; but now he refers the matter to length of time. For he said not simply, ‘These who have accompanied us’, but, ‘all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. Beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, one must be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection’ (Acts 1:22). Thus Peter did not make the election himself. He introduced the proposition to that effect, at the same time pointing out that this was not his own, but from old time by prophecy; so that he acted as expositor, not as preceptor”.

Augustine stated<sup>7</sup> that Matthias’ selection was a victory for Matthias: “The holy Matthias received the bishopric of that lost apostle. Let no one be so dull, no one so faithless, as to dispute this. Matthias won for himself a victory, not a wrong, in that he carried off the spoils of the traitor from the victory of the Lord Christ” (i.e. from the Lord’s victory at the Cross).

### **Glimpses of Matthias During the First Year of the Church**

John Chrysostom stated<sup>8</sup> that the Lord appeared to Matthias as well as to others of the Apostles after the Resurrection and after Matthias was numbered with the Twelve. He appeared to Mary Magdalene first (Mark 16:9), and also to Peter, the Twelve, 500 brethren at once, James the Lord’s brother, and to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). But He also appeared to “all the Apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:7).

“But among the other men He was seen first by those people who most of all longed to see Him”.

“After He was received up, Matthias was taken into the number, but not after the resurrection immediately. Matthias was called after His ascension, and yet still saw Him. Therefore Paul does not set down the time but, simply and without defining when, recounts the appearance. For indeed it is probable that many appearances took place”.

“After that, He was seen by James’. For the Lord is said to have ordained him, Himself, and made him Bishop in Jerusalem first. ‘Then to all the apostles’ (1 Corinthians 15:7). For there were also other apostles, such as the Seventy, who saw Him”.

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<sup>6</sup> John Chrysostom, *Commentaries on Acts*, III, 1

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, *The Letters of Petilian, the Donatist*, II, viii, 17.

<sup>8</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, XXXVIII, 5.

“But after Peter, He appeared also to each at intervals, and at one time to fewer, at another to more, hereby making them witnesses and teachers of each other, and rendering His apostles trustworthy in all that they said”.

In the first year of the Church, the Book of Acts describes several encounters between the Apostles and the religious leaders. In all cases, either Peter or John is quoted as being the spokesman for the Apostles. On Pentecost, Peter was described “standing with the Eleven” (Acts 2:14) in his message to the people who were confused by the events taking place. When Peter and John healed the lame man, the man held onto both Peter and John, but Peter was the one who spoke to the people about what had happened (Acts 3:1-12). When Peter and John were arrested for this, it was Peter who spoke in their defense (Acts 4:1-8). When the Twelve were arrested and put in prison, an angel let them out during the night. Summoned before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, the account reads that Peter *and the other Apostles answered* and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:17-29).

Few details are given in Acts regarding the exact accusations that were brought against the Apostles, or who of the Twelve answered these accusations. Pseudo Clement<sup>9</sup> records one example where Matthias responded:

“After Simon the Zealot spoke, Matthias, who was substituted as an apostle in the place of Judas, began to exhort the people that they should not regard Jesus with hatred, nor speak evil of Him. For it were far more proper, even for one who might be in ignorance or in doubt concerning Jesus, to love than to hate Him. For God has affixed a reward to love, a penalty to hatred. ‘For the very fact,’ said he, ‘that He assumed a Jewish body, and was born among the Jews, how has not this incited us all to love Him?’ When he had spoken this, and more to the same effect, he stopped”.

### **Matthias’ Character and Teaching**

Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria contrasted Matthias with Nicolas, one of the first seven deacons who turned into a heretic. Both were very strict in following Jesus’ command, “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13). Both applied this to the pleasures of the flesh, but their methods were different. The Apostles at first rebuked Nicolas for jealousy concerning his wife. In giving up the pleasures of the flesh, Nicolas gave permission to anyone who wished to marry his wife. Nicolas’ followers took his words literally and practiced open fornication (Revelation 2:6, 15), and Nicolas was branded a heretic because he didn’t correct them. Eusebius stated<sup>10</sup>:

“At this time the so-called sect of the Nicolaitans made its appearance and lasted for a very short time. They boasted that the author of their sect was Nicolas, one of the deacons who, with Stephen, were appointed by the apostles for the purpose of ministering to the poor. Clement of Alexandria<sup>11</sup>, relates the following things concerning him. ‘They say that he had a beautiful wife, and after the Ascension of the Savior, being accused by the apostles of jealousy, he led her into their midst and gave permission to any one that wished to marry her. For they say

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<sup>9</sup> Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 59

<sup>10</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 29.

<sup>11</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 4

that this was in accord with that saying of his, that one ought to restrict the flesh. And those that have followed his heresy, imitating blindly and foolishly that which was done and said, commit fornication without shame. But I understand that Nicolas had to do with no other woman than her to whom he was married, and that, so far as his children are concerned, his daughters continued in a state of virginity until old age, and his son remained uncorrupt. If this is so, when he brought his wife, whom he jealously loved, into the midst of the apostles, he was evidently renouncing his passion; and when he used the expression, ‘to restrict the flesh,’ he was inculcating self-control in the face of those pleasures that are eagerly pursued. For I suppose that, in accordance with the command of the Savior, he did not wish to serve two masters, pleasure and the Lord. But they say that Matthias also taught in the same manner that we ought to fight against and restrict the flesh, and not give way to it for the sake of pleasure, but strengthen the soul by faith and knowledge’. So much concerning those who then attempted to pervert the truth, but in less time than it has taken to tell, Nicolas’ sect became entirely extinct”.

Matthias, in his life, illustrated what the Apostle Paul later wrote down regarding restricting the flesh. Paul counseled his Churches that in our flesh nothing good dwells (Romans 7:18). If we set our mind on the things of the flesh and live according to the flesh, this is death. But to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:5-6, 13). This happens because the fleshly mind is at enmity with God and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8). Therefore, Paul counseled, do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:4), and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts (Romans 13:14).

Doing this generates a conflict. “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:17). For example, “The good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God -- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:19-25).

To deal with this conflict, Matthias taught a strengthening of the soul by faith and knowledge. Paul, in his eloquence, stated this as follows: “We do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. That you may be strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Colossians 1:9-12). This strengthening, however, occurs in the inner man, not in the flesh (Ephesians 3:16).

Some heretics in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century claimed to be followers of Matthias. Hippolytus stated<sup>12</sup>, “Basilides, and Isidorus, the true son and disciple of Basilides, say that Matthias communicated to them secret discourses, which, Matthias being specially instructed, he heard from

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<sup>12</sup> Hippolytus, The Refutation of All Heresies, VII, 8.

the Savior. Basilides combined Biblical material<sup>13</sup> along with elements of Platonic and Stoic philosophy. Basilides taught a wholly transcendent God, who created an evolving universe and planted in it an elect race. He said that all parts of the world are good, and administered by good world-rulers, one of whom is the God of the Jews. In due time a heavenly light descended and raised up Jesus to summon the elect. Basilides' followers formed a separate sect in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. Hippolytus stated<sup>14</sup> that Basilides, and the entire band of these heretics, not only absolutely belies Matthias, but even the Savior Himself.

Eusebius stated<sup>15</sup> that heretics similarly generated some of the Apocryphal Gospels and ascribed them to various Apostles:

“But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of these also, distinguishing those works, which according to ecclesiastical tradition are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but disputed, are yet at the same time known to most ecclesiastical writers. We have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles. These include, for instance, such books as the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Matthias (which is now lost), or of any others besides them. Also the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics. Wherefore they are not to be placed even among the rejected writings, but are all of them to be cast aside as absurd and impious”.

### **Matthias' and Andrew's Early Missionary Journey to Africa**

After Pentecost, Matthias preached at first just around the cities of Judea<sup>16</sup>. After this he went to Ethiopia for a while where he was subjected to considerable physical abuse, which he bore with joy. Andrew then joined him briefly in Ethiopia to help out during some difficult times. Some accounts say<sup>17</sup> that Matthias' lot was Judea; other accounts say<sup>18</sup> that his lot was part of Ethiopia. Both may be correct. Matthias arrived in Ethiopia prior to Matthew, but Matthew stayed there many years longer. The part of Ethiopia that Matthias went to was farther South of Upper Nubia, where the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-39) came from, and was not at all receptive to the Mosaic Law like the eunuch.

“The part of Ethiopia that Matthias went to was called the country of the cannibals<sup>19</sup>. Arriving there, he discovered that the men of that city neither ate bread nor drank wine; but they

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<sup>13</sup> F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1978, p. 141.

<sup>14</sup> Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, VII, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 9.

<sup>17</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, *The Lives of the Holy Apostles*, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 234.

<sup>18</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

<sup>19</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

ate the flesh of men, and drank their blood. Every man, therefore, who came into their city they laid hold of, and they gouged out his eyes, and gave him a drug to drink, prepared by sorcery and magic; and from drinking the drug his heart was altered and his mind deranged”.

“Matthias then came into the gate of their city, and the men of that city laid hold of him, and gouged out his eyes. And after this, they made him drink the drug of their magical deception, and led him away to the prison, and put beside him grass to eat, but he ate it not. For when he had partaken of their drug, his heart was not altered, nor his mind deranged; but he kept praying to God, weeping, and saying. ‘Lord Jesus Christ, for whose sake we have forsaken all things and have followed You, knowing that You are the helper of all who hope in You. Attend then and behold what they have done to Matthias, Your servant, how they have made me like the brutes, for You are He who knows all things. If, therefore, You have ordained that the wicked men in this city should eat me up, I will not by any means flee from Your dispensation. Afford to me then, O Lord, the light of mine eyes, that at least I may behold what the wicked men in this city have in hand for me. Do not forsake me, O my Lord Jesus Christ, and do not give me up to this bitter death”.

“While Matthias was thus praying in the prison, a light shone, and a voice came out of the light saying, ‘Beloved Matthias, receive your sight’. And immediately he received his sight. And again a voice came out saying, ‘Be of good courage, Matthias, and be not dismayed; for I shall not by any means forsake you, for I shall deliver you from all danger. And not only you, but also all your brethren who are with you: for I am with you everywhere and at all times. But remain here twenty-seven days for the edification of many souls; and after that I shall send forth Andrew to you, and he shall lead you forth out of this prison; and not you only, but also all who hear’. Having said this, the Savior said again to Matthias, ‘Peace be to you, Matthias’, and went into heaven. Then Matthias having beheld Him, said to the Lord, ‘Let your grace abide with me, O Lord Jesus”.

“Then Matthias therefore sat down in the prison, and sang. And it came to pass that, when the executioners came into the prison to bring forth the men to eat them, Matthias also shut his eyes, that they might not behold that he saw. And the executioners having come to him, read the ticket in his hand, and said among themselves, ‘Yet three days, and we shall bring out this one also from the prison, and slay him’. Because in the case of every man whom they laid hold of, they noted that day on which they laid hold of him, and tied a ticket to his right hand, that they might know the completion of the thirty days”.

“And it came to pass when the twenty-seven days were fulfilled since Matthias was seized, the Lord appeared in the country where Andrew was teaching, and said to him. ‘Rise up, and set out with your disciples to the country of the cannibals, and bring Matthias out of that place; for in three days, the men of the city will slay him for their food’. And Andrew answered and said, ‘My Lord, I shall not be able to accomplish the journey there within the three days. But send Your angel quickly, that he may bring him out there; for you know, Lord, that I also am flesh, and shall not be able to go there quickly’. And He said to Andrew, ‘Rise up early, and go down to the sea with your disciples, and you shall find a boat upon the shore, and you shall go aboard with your disciples’. And having said this, the Savior again said, ‘Peace to you, Andrew, along with those with you!’ And He went into the heavens”.

“And Andrew having risen up early, proceeded to the sea along with his disciples; and having come down to the shore, he saw a little boat, and in the boat three men sitting. For the Lord by His own power had prepared a boat, and He it was in human shape a pilot in the boat. And He brought two angels whom He made to appear like men, and they were sitting in the boat. Andrew, therefore, seeing the boat, and the three who were in it, rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And going to them, he said, ‘Where are you going, brethren, with this little boat?’ And the Lord answered and said to him, ‘We are going to the country of the cannibals’. And Andrew, seeing

Jesus, did not recognize Him; for Jesus was hiding His Godhead, and He appeared to Andrew like a pilot.

And Jesus hearing Andrew say, 'I too am going to the country of the cannibals, said to him, 'Every man avoids that city, and how are you going there?' And Andrew answered, 'We have some small business to do there, and we must get through with it; but if you can, do us this kindness to convey us to the country of the cannibals, to which also you intend to go'. Jesus answered, 'Come on board'. And Andrew said that he did not have any passage-money to give them, nor did they have any food, since that was the way the Lord told them to travel (Matthew 10:9-10). Jesus answered, 'If this is the commandment, which you received, and you keep it, come on board my boat with all joy'.

"And having gone on board, he sat down by the boat's sail. And Jesus answered and said to one of the angels, 'Go down to the hold of the boat, and bring up three loaves, that the men may eat, in case they are hungry, having come to us from a long journey'. And he rose and went down to the hold of the boat, and brought up three loaves, as the Lord commanded him; and he gave them the loaves. Then Jesus said to Andrew, 'Rise up, brother, with your friends; partake of food, that you may be strong to bear the tossing of the sea'. And Andrew said to his disciples, 'My children, we have found great kindness from this man. Stand up, then, and partake of the nourishment of bread, that you may be strong to bear the tossing of the sea'".

"As the boat pulled off from land, Andrew's disciples fell asleep in the boat. As they moved along, Andrew, turned to the Lord, not knowing that it was the Lord, and said to Him, 'I have never seen any man so steering in the sea as I now see you. For sixteen years have I sailed the sea, and behold this is the seventeenth, and I have not seen such skill; for truly the boat is just as if on land. Where, young man, did you obtain your skill'. Then Jesus answered and said to Andrew, 'We also have often sailed the sea, and been in danger; but since you are a disciple of Him called Jesus, the sea has recognized you that you are righteous, and has become calm, and has not lifted its waves against the boat'. Then Andrew cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'I thank You, my Lord Jesus Christ, that I have met a man who glorifies Your name'.

"And when the boat was about to come near the land, Andrew also fell asleep. And Jesus said to His angels, 'Spread your hands under him, and carry Andrew and his disciples, and put them outside of the city of the cannibals; and having laid them on the ground, return to me'. And the angels did as Jesus commanded them, and the angels returned to Jesus; and He went up into the heavens with His angels".

"And when it was morning, Andrew, awakened and looked up, and found himself sitting on the ground. And looking around, he saw his disciples sleeping on the ground; and he woke them, and said. 'Rise up, my children, and know the great dispensation that has happened to us, and learn that the Lord was with us in the boat, and we didn't know Him. For He transformed Himself as if He were a pilot in the boat, and humbled Himself, and appeared to us as a man, putting us to the test'. And Andrew, recovering himself, said, 'Lord, I recognized Your excellent words, but You did not show Yourself to me, and because of this I did not know You'. And his disciples answered that while they were sleeping, they had a vision of Paradise that included Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David with the angels around the Throne of God. In that vision, the Lord told them, 'Listen to the apostles in all things whatsoever they shall ask you'".

"Then Andrew, having heard, rejoiced with great joy that his disciples had been deemed worthy to behold these wonderful things. Looking up into heaven, he said, 'Speak to me, Lord Jesus Christ; for I know that You are not far from Your servants'".

"And when Andrew had said this, he had another vision of Jesus. And Andrew worshipped Him, saying, 'Pardon me, Lord Jesus Christ, for I saw You like a man on the sea, and conversed with You. Wherein I have sinned, my Lord Jesus, that You did not show Yourself to me on the

sea?’ And Jesus answered, ‘You have not sinned, but I did this to show you that I am able to do all things, and to appear to every one as I wish. Now therefore rise up, go into the city to Matthias, and bring him forth out of the prison, and all the strangers that are with him. For, I will show you, Andrew, what you must suffer before going into this city. They will heap upon you tortures and insults, and scatter your flesh in the ways and the streets, and your blood shall flow to the ground, but they are not able to put you to death. Endure, just as you saw me beaten, insulted, and crucified, for there are those who are destined to believe in this city’. And having said this, the Savior went into the heavens”.

“And Andrew went into the city along with his disciples, and no one saw him. And when he came to the prison, he saw seven guards standing at the gate, and they fell down and expired. And he marked the gate with the sign of the cross, and it opened of its own accord. And having gone in with his disciples, he found Matthias sitting and singing; and seeing him, he stood up, and they greeted each other with a holy kiss<sup>20</sup>. And he said to Matthias, ‘Brother, how have you been here?’ For yet three days, and they will bring you out to be food for them. Where are the great mysteries, which you have been taught, and the wonderful things, which we have believed?’ And Matthias said to him, ‘Did you not hear the Lord saying, ‘I shall send you like sheep into the midst of wolves?’ (Luke 10:3) They brought me here into the prison, and I prayed to the Lord; and He said to me, ‘Remain here twenty-seven days, and I shall send you Andrew, and he will bring you forth out of the prison’. And now, behold, it has come to pass as the Lord said’. Then Andrew looked and saw three men eating grass naked. And he beat his breast, and said, ‘Consider, O Lord, what the men suffer; how have they made them like the irrational brutes?’”

“And he said to Satan, ‘Woe to you enemy of God, and to your angels, because the strangers here have done nothing to you. How you have brought upon them punishment! How long have you war against the human race! You forced Adam to be expelled out of paradise, and caused men to be mixed up with transgression; and the Lord was enraged, and brought on the deluge so as to sweep man away. And you have come to this city too, in order that you may make those who are here eat men, that the end of them also may be in execration and destruction, thinking in yourself that God will sweep away the work of His hands. Have you not heard that God said, ‘I will not bring a deluge upon the earth?’ (Genesis 8:21) But if there is any punishment prepared, it is for the sake of taking vengeance upon you”.

“Then Andrew and Matthias prayed and laid their hands upon the faces of the blind men who were in the prison, and immediately they all received their sight. And again they laid their hand upon their hearts, and their minds were changed into human reason. Then Andrew said, ‘Rise up, and go into the lower parts of the city, and you shall find in the way a great fig tree. Sit under the fig tree, and eat of its fruit, until I come to you; but if I delay coming there, you will find abundance of food for yourselves. For the fruit shall not fail from the fig tree, but according as you eat it shall produce more fruit, and nourish you, as the Lord has said’. And they said to Andrew, ‘Go along with us, master, lest perchance the wicked men of this city see us, and shut us up, and inflict upon us greater and more dreadful tortures than they have inflicted upon us. And Andrew said to them, ‘Go; for not even a dog shall bark against you. And there were in all two hundred and seventy men and forty-nine women whom Andrew and Matthias released from the prison. And the men went as Andrew said to them”.

“And Matthias went along with his disciples out of the eastern gate of the city. And Andrew commanded a cloud, and the cloud took up Matthias and the disciples of Andrew; and the cloud set them down on the mountain where Peter was teaching, and they remained beside him”.

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<sup>20</sup> “The Holy Kiss” is also called “The Embrace of Peace” and preceded the Eucharist in the Early Church. Its purpose was an insurance against falsehood between brothers to prevent the “unholy kiss” that Judas gave Jesus when he betrayed Him (Mark 14:44-45, Luke 22:48).

Thus Matthias, who was in his mid 60's at this time, played the role of shepherd to the prisoners, while Andrew, who was in his early 40's, took a more aggressive role. This is similar to the roles of Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey. In Lystra, Paul's healed a man who was born crippled. The peoples' first reaction to Paul's healing was that Paul and Barnabas were gods. "Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian *language*, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' And Barnabas they called Zeus<sup>21</sup>, and Paul, Hermes<sup>22</sup>, because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14:11-12).

"And Andrew left the prison, and walked about in the city. The executioners went to the prison to bring out the men for their food, according to the custom; and they found the doors of the prison opened, and the guards that guarded it lying dead upon the ground. And they went, and reported to the rulers of the city, saying, 'We found the prison opened, and we found nobody inside. But we found the guards lying dead upon the ground'. And the rulers said among themselves, 'What has happened? Do you mean to say that some persons have gone into the prison of the city, and have killed the guards, and taken away those that were shut up?' And they spoke to the executioners, saying, 'Go to the prison, and bring the men that are dead, that we may eat them today. And go tomorrow, and bring all the old men of the city, and cast lots upon them, until seven lots come, and we slay seven each day. And they shall be to us for food until we may choose young men, and put them in boats as sailors, that they may go away to the countries round about, and attack them, and bring some men here, that they may be food to us'".

And the executioners brought the seven men that were dead. And an oven was built in the midst of the city, and in the oven there was a large trough in which they killed the men, and their blood ran down into the trough, and they drew out the blood and drank it. And they brought the men, and put them into the trough. And when the executioners were lifting their hands against them, Andrew prayed to the Lord, saying, 'Lord Jesus Christ, who did order me to come into this city, do not let those in this city do any evil, but let the knives fall out of the hands of the wicked ones'. And immediately the knives of the wicked men fell, and their hands became like stone. And the rulers, having seen what had happened, wept saying, 'Woe to us, for there are magicians here, who have gone into the prison and brought out the men; for they have bewitched these also. Let us go now, and gather together the old men of the city, since we are hungry'".

"And they gathered them together, and found two hundred and seventeen. They brought them to the rulers, and they cast lots, and the lot came upon seven old men. And one of those taken by lot answered and said to the officers, 'I pray you, I have one son; take him, and slay him instead of me, and let me go'. And the officers said to him, 'We cannot take your son, unless we bring him first to our superiors. And the officers told the rulers, and the rulers said, 'If he will give us his son instead of himself, let him go'. When the officers told the old man, he said, 'I have also a daughter along with my son; take them, and kill them, only let me go'. And he gave his children to the officers, that they might kill them. And the children wept to each other, and prayed the officers, saying, 'Do not kill us, as we are of so small a size; but let us complete our size, and so kill us'. For it was a custom in that city, and they did not bury their dead, but ate them. And the officers did not hearken to the children, nor take pity upon them, but carried them to the trough weeping and crying'".

"As they led the children away, Andrew began to cry. He looked up to heaven and said, 'Lord Jesus Christ, as You did hear me in the case of the dead men, and did not suffer them to be eaten up, so also now hear me, that the executioners may not kill these children. Let the knives be loosened out of the hands of the executioners'. And immediately the knives were loosened, and fell out of the hands of the executioners. The executioners, having beheld what had happened,

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<sup>21</sup> In Greek mythology, Zeus was the ruler of the gods, and was the equivalent of the Roman god, Jupiter.

<sup>22</sup> In Greek mythology, Hermes was the messenger of the gods, and was equivalent of the Roman god, Mercury.

were exceedingly afraid. And Andrew glorified the Lord because He had listened to him in every work. And the rulers wept saying, ‘Woe unto us! What are we to do?’”

“And the devil appeared in the likeness of an old man, and began to say in the midst of all, ‘Woe to you! Because you are now dying, and have no food; what can sheep and oxen do for you? They will not be nearly enough for you. But make a search here for one who has come to the city, a stranger named Andrew, and kill him. For if you do not, he will not permit you to carry on this practice any longer; for it was he who let the men out of the prison. Assuredly the man is in this city, and you have not seen him’. And Andrew saw the devil, how he was talking to the multitudes; but the devil did not see Andrew. Then Andrew answered the devil, ‘Belial most fiendish, who are the foe of every creature; my Lord Jesus Christ will bring you down to the abyss’. And the devil heard this and said, ‘I hear your voice indeed, and I know your voice, but where you are standing I don’t know. And Andrew answered, ‘Why, then, have you been called Amael<sup>23</sup>? Is it not because you are blind, not seeing all the saints?’ And the devil said to the citizens, ‘Look around now for him speaking to me, for he is the man. And the citizens, having run in different directions, shut the gates of the city, and searched for the him, and did not see him”.

“Just then Andrew had a vision from the Lord, where the Lord said to him, ‘Andrew, rise up and show yourself to them, that they may learn my power, and the powerlessness of the devil working in them”.

“Then Andrew rose up, and said in presence of all, ‘I am Andrew whom you seek’. And the multitudes ran and laid hold of him saying, ‘What you have done to us, we also will do to you’. And they reasoned among themselves saying, ‘By what death shall we kill him?’ And they said to each other, ‘If we take off his head, his death is not torture; and if we burn him, he will not be for food to us’. Then one of them, the devil having entered into him, said to the multitudes, ‘As he has done to us, so let us also do to him. Let us fasten a rope to his neck, and drag him through the streets and lanes of the city; and when he is dead, we shall share his body’. And they did as he said to them; fastening a rope round his neck, they dragged him through the streets and lanes of the city, and the flesh of Andrew stuck to the ground, and his blood flowed to the ground like water. And when it was evening they cast him into the prison, having bound his hands behind him; and he was in real distress”.

“And in the morning they brought him out, fastened a rope round his neck, and dragged him about; and again his flesh stuck to the ground, and his blood flowed. And Andrew wept and prayed, saying, ‘Do not forsake me, my Lord Jesus Christ; for I know that You are not far from Your servants’. And as he was praying, the devil walked behind, and said to the multitudes, ‘Strike him on the mouth, that he may not speak”.

“And when it was evening they took him again to the prison, bound his hands behind him, and left him till the next day. And the devil took with him seven demons whom Andrew had cast out of the countries round about, and going into the prison, they stood before him, wishing to kill him. And the demons said to Andrew, ‘Now you have fallen into our hands. Where is your glory and your exultation, you that raised yourself up against us, and dishonored us, and told our doings to the people in every place and country, and have made our temples to become desolate, in order that sacrifices may not be brought to them? Because of this, then, we shall also kill you, like your teacher called Jesus, and John whom Herod beheaded. But when they saw the seal upon his forehead, which the Lord gave him, they were afraid, and did not come near him, but fled. And the devil said to them, ‘Why have you fled from him, my children, and not killed him? And the demons answered, ‘We cannot kill him, but kill him if you are able; for we knew him before he came into the distress of his humiliation. Then one of the demons answered, ‘We cannot kill him, but let us mock him in the distress of his humiliation’. And the demons came and stood before

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<sup>23</sup> One manuscript spells this “Samael”.

him, and scoffed at him. As Andrew wept, the voice of the devil changed came to him saying, 'Andrew, why are you weeping you?' And Andrew answered, 'I am weeping because God commanded me, saying, 'Be patient toward them'. And the devil said, 'If you can do anything, do it'. And Andrew answered, 'Is it for this, then, that you do these things to me? But forbid it that I should disobey the commandment of my Lord; for if the Lord shall put me in charge of this city, I shall chastise you as you deserve'. And having heard this, they fled".

"And when it was morning they brought him out again, fastened a rope about his neck, and dragged him; and again his flesh stuck to the ground, and his blood flowed to the ground like water. And Andrew, as he was being dragged along, wept, saying, 'Lord Jesus Christ, be not displeased with me; for You know, Lord, what the fiend has inflicted upon me, along with his demons. These tortures are enough, my Lord; for, I have been dragged about for three days. But remember that You were three hours upon the cross, and cried out to the Father, 'My Father, why have You forsaken me?' Where are Your words, Lord, which You spoke to us, confirming us, saying to us, You shall not lose one hair? (Luke 21:18) Consider, Lord, what has become of my flesh, and the hairs of my head'. Then Jesus said to Andrew, 'O Andrew, the heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Turn then, Andrew, and behold your flesh that has fallen, and your hair, what has become of them'. And Andrew turned, and saw great trees springing up, bearing fruit; and he glorified God".

"And when it was evening they took him again, and cast him into the prison, having bound his hands behind him; and he was exceedingly exhausted. And the men of the city said among themselves, 'Perhaps he will die in the night, and we will not find him alive on the following day; for he was languid, and his flesh was spent'".

"And the Lord appeared in the prison, and stretching out His hand, said to Andrew, 'Give me your hand, and rise up whole'. And Andrew, having beheld the Lord Jesus, gave Him his hand, and rose up whole. And falling down, he worshipped Him, and said, 'I thank You, my Lord Jesus Christ, that You have speedily brought help to me'.

And Andrew looked into the middle of the prison, saw a pillar standing, and upon the pillar there stood an alabaster statue. And Andrew went up to the statue, and said to the pillar, and the statue, 'Fear the sign of the cross, which the heaven and the earth dread. Let the statue set upon the pillar bring up much water through its mouth. When Andrew had said this, immediately the stone statue cast out of its mouth water in abundance, as if out of a canal. And the water stood high upon the earth; and it was exceedingly caustic, eating into the flesh of men".

"And when it was morning, the men of the city saw it, and began to flee, saying, 'Woe to us! We are now dying'. And the water killed their cattle and their children; and they began to flee out of the city. Then Andrew prayed, 'Lord Jesus Christ, send Michael, Your archangel, in a cloud of fire, and be a wall round the city, that no one may be able to escape out of the fire'. And immediately a cloud of fire came down and encircled the city like a wall; and the water was as high as the neck of those men, and it was eating them up exceedingly. And they wept, saying, 'All these things have come upon us because of the stranger who is in the prison. Let us go and release him, lest we die'".

"And they went out, crying with a loud voice, 'God of the stranger, take away from us this water'. And the apostle knew that they were in great affliction, and said to the statue, 'Stop the water, for they have repented'. And the statue ceased flowing, and no longer brought forth water. And the men of the city, cried out, saying. 'Have pity upon us, God of the stranger, and do not according to our unbelief, and according to what we have done to this man, but take away this water'. And Andrew came out of the prison; and the multitude cried out, 'Have pity upon us'. And the old man, who gave up his children, prayed at the feet of Andrew, saying, 'Have pity upon me'. And Andrew answered the old man, 'I wonder how you can say, 'Have pity upon me'; for

you had no pity upon your children, but gave them up to be slain instead of you. Therefore I say unto you, at the hour this water goes away, into the abyss shall you go, with the fourteen executioners who slay the men every day'. And he came to the place of the trough, where they used to slay the men. And Andrew looking up to heaven, prayed before the whole multitude; and the earth was opened, and swallowed up the water, along with the old man and the executioners. And the men, having seen what had happened, were exceedingly afraid, and began to say, 'Woe to us because this man is from God; and now he will kill us because of the afflictions which we have caused him. For, behold, what he said to the executioners and the old man has befallen them. Now, therefore, he will command the fire, and it will burn us'. And Andrew, having heard, said to them, 'Fear not, children; for I shall not send you also to Hades; but those have gone, that you may believe in our Lord Jesus Christ'".

"Then Andrew prayed, and all who had died in the water came to life. And after these things he drew a plan of a church, and he caused the church to be built. And he baptized them, and gave them the ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying to them, 'Stand by these, in order that you may know the mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ'. And they all prayed, 'We pray you, stay with us a few days, that we may be filled with your fountain, because we are newly planted'".

And Andrew had a vision from the Lord to remain there seven days, until he should confirm their souls in the faith. And going through the city, he proclaimed the Gospel, and even brought up the men who were in the abyss. And Andrew said, 'I thank You, my Lord Jesus Christ, who wish to save every soul, that You did not allow me to go forth out of this city in anger. And after the seven days, while Andrew was leaving, all came together to him, from the child even to the elder, and sent him on his way, saying. 'There is one God, and one Lord Jesus Christ, who alone does wonders; to whom be glory and strength for ever. Amen'".

The hymns of the Church celebrate Matthias' work in Ethiopia as follows:

"As the mouth of God<sup>24</sup> you snatched from the throat of the slayer of men those whom he had cruelly slaughtered and made food for his malice, O wise one. And with the laver of regeneration, you brought them to the Lord, chanting unceasingly: you people, exalt Him supremely for all ages".

"As the weapon of the Word of God, O glorious one, you utterly ground down the sword of falsehood and the weapon of evil. By the power of God you cast down the sacrifices, pillars and temples of the idolators. But you made into temples of the Trinity those who cry: You people, exalt Him supremely for all ages!"

"With the rod of grace<sup>25</sup>, you drew men forth from the abyss of vainglory, O right wondrous Matthias. Obedient to the behest of the Teacher Who illumined your understanding in all things, He showed you to be an Apostle and an honored divine herald of His unapproachable divinity, O most blessed one".

"O blessed Matthias<sup>26</sup>, you traversed the noetic Eden like a river flooded with divine waters. And you gave the earth mystic waters to drink, and have shown it to be fertile. Wherefore, pray that God grant our souls peace and great mercy".

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<sup>24</sup> "Ode VIII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>", Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>25</sup> "Ode IX for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>", Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>26</sup> "Five Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>", Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

“O divinely inspired Matthias<sup>27</sup>, with the lightning flashes of your teachings you hallowed the circuit of the world, illumining all. Guiding all to the knowledge of God, you made those who slept before in the darkness of vanity and the gloom of all ungodliness to be receptacles of the light”.

“Let us praise Andrew<sup>28</sup>, the preacher of the Faith and servant of the Word, for he drew forth men from the abyss, wielding the Cross, instead of a rod. Lowering a line of power, he leads souls up from the deception of the enemy and offers them to God as an acceptable gift”.

“Sailing the sea of life<sup>29</sup> in the vessel of your body, you discovered Christ, the Steersman, Who guides all things. O most blessed one, you stand before Him rejoicing, O most honored Andrew”.

“You watered<sup>30</sup> the parched desert with your divine words, O wise one, and showed it forth as fertile, bearing fruit, the children of the Church, through the broadcasting of the seed. Glory to Him that gave you the Spirit”.

### **Matthias, Peter and Andrew Travel to Cappadocia**

“When Andrew left<sup>31</sup> the city of the cannibals, a luminous cloud snatched him up, and carried him away to the mountain where Peter and Matthias and Alexander were sitting. And when he saw them, they greeted him with great joy. Then Peter said to him, ‘What has happened to you, brother Andrew? Have you sown the word of truth in the country of the cannibals?’ Andrew said, ‘Yes, Peter, through your prayers; but the men of that city dragged me through their street three days, so that my blood stained the whole street. Peter said, ‘Be a man in the Lord, Andrew, and come here, and rest from your labor. For if the good husbandman laboriously till the ground, it will also bear fruit, and immediately all his toil will be turned into joy; but if he toil, and his land bring forth no fruit, he has double toil”’.

“And while he was thus speaking, they all had a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to them, ‘Greetings my co-heirs, be courageous, for truly you shall endure toils in this world for mankind. But be bold; I will give you rest and repose in the kingdom of my Father. Arise, then, and go into the city of the barbarians, and preach in it; and I will be with you in the wonders that shall happen in it by your hands”’.

“And Peter, and Andrew, and Alexander, and Rufus<sup>32</sup>, and Matthias, went into the city of the barbarians<sup>33</sup>. And after they had come near the city, Andrew said to Peter, ‘Do we have to

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<sup>27</sup> “Five Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>28</sup> “Sticheron for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, November 30<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>29</sup> “Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, November 30<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>30</sup> “Ode IV for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, November 30<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>31</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Acts of Peter and Andrew, from a Bodleian Manuscript”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8. The only copy of this manuscript is incomplete.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander and Rufus were the sons of Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21). Together they were among the people from Cyprus and Cyrene who helped start the Church in Antioch (Acts 11:20). Later Alexander turned false and was rejected by the Apostles (1 Timothy 1:20, 2 Timothy 4:14). Rufus remained faithful (Romans 16:13) and was martyred with Ignatius of Antioch in c. 107 AD.

<sup>33</sup> The text does not say which “city of the barbarians” this was. Since the term “barbarian” refers to non-Hellenic culture, the area where they went was probably Northern Cappadocia, on the East coast of the Black Sea, as referred to in Thurston and Attwater, Butler’s Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, February 24.

undergo toils in this city, as in the country of the cannibals?’ Peter said to him, ‘I don’t know. But, behold, there is an old man before us sowing in his field. If we go up to him, let us say to him, ‘Give us bread’. And if he gives us bread, we may know that we are not to suffer in this city; but if he say to us, we have no bread, on the other hand, we shall know that suffering again awaits us’. And when they came up to the old man, Peter said to him, ‘Greetings, farmer!’ And the farmer said to them, ‘Greetings to you too, merchants!’ Peter said to him, ‘Have you bread to give to these children, for we have been in want?’ The old man said to them, ‘Wait a little, and look after the oxen, and the plough, and the land, that I may go into the city, and get you loaves’. Peter said to him, ‘If you provide hospitality for us, we shall look after the cattle and the field’. The old man said, ‘So be it’. Peter said to him, ‘Are the oxen your own?’ The old man said, ‘No; I have them on hire’. Peter said to him, ‘Go into the city’. And the old man went into the city.

And Peter arose, and girded up his cloak and his under-garment, and said to Andrew, ‘It is not right for us to rest and be idle; above all, when the old man is working for us, having left his own work’. Then Peter took hold of the plough, and sowed the wheat, while Andrew was behind the oxen. Then Andrew took the plough out of Peter’s hand, and sowed the wheat, saying, ‘O seed cast into the ground in the field of the righteous, come up, and come to the light. Let the young men of the city therefore come forth, whom I found in the pit of destruction until today. For, behold, the Apostles of Christ are coming into the city, pardoning the sins of those who believe in the Lord Jesus, and healing every disease, and every sickness’”.

A section of the manuscript is missing here.

“‘Pray for me, that He may have mercy upon me, and that I may be delivered from this strait’. And many of the multitude believed in Christ, because of the saying of the woman; and they fell at the feet of the apostles, and adored them. And they laid their hands upon them. And they healed those in the city that were sick, and gave sight to the blind and, hearing to the deaf, and drove out the demons. All the multitude glorified the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”.

“And there was a certain rich man in the city, by name Onesiphorus. He, having seen the miracles done by the apostles, said to them, ‘If I believe in your God, can I also do a miracle like you?’ Andrew said to him, ‘If you will forsake all that belongs to you, and your wife and your children, as we also have done, then you also shall do miracles’. When Onesiphorus heard this, he was filled with rage, and took his scarf and threw it over Andrew’s neck, and struck him, and said to him, ‘You are a sorcerer. Do you force me to abandon my wife, and my children, and my goods?’ Then Peter, having turned and seen him striking Andrew, said to him, ‘Stop striking Andrew’. Onesiphorus said to him, ‘I see that you are more sensible than he. Do you then tell me to leave my wife, and my children, and my goods? What do you say?’ Peter said to him, ‘One thing I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to go into the kingdom of heaven’. When Onesiphorus heard this, he was even more filled with rage and anger, and took his scarf off the neck of Andrew, and threw it upon the neck of Peter. And so he dragged him along, saying, ‘Truly you are a great sorcerer, more than the other; for a camel cannot go through the eye of a needle. But if you will show me this miracle, I will believe in your God; and not only I, but also the whole city. But if not, you shall be grievously punished in the midst of the city’. And when Peter heard this, he was exceedingly grieved, and stood and stretched forth his hands towards heaven, and prayed. ‘O Lord our God, listen to me at this time; for they will ensnare us from Your own words. Do not overlook us, for you are He who is praised by the cherubim’”.

“And after he had said this, they had a vision of the Savior, wearing a linen garment; and He said to them, ‘Be courageous, and tremble not, my chosen disciples; for I am with you always. Let the needle and the camel be brought’. And after saying this, He went up into the heavens”.

“And there was a certain merchant in the city, who had believed in the Lord through the Apostle Philip; and when he heard of this, he ran and searched for a needle with a big eye, to do a favor to the apostles. When Peter learned this, he said, ‘My son, do not search for a big needle; for nothing is impossible with God; rather bring us a small needle’. And after he brought the needle, and all the multitude of the city were standing by to see, Peter looked up and saw a camel coming. And he ordered her to be brought. Then he fixed the needle in the ground, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ, I order you, O camel, to go through the eye of the needle’. Then the eye of the needle was opened like a gate, and the camel went through it, and the multitude saw it. Again Peter said to the camel, ‘Go again through the needle’. And the camel went a second time. When Onesiphorus saw this, he said to Peter; ‘Truly you are a great sorcerer; but I will not believe unless I send my own camel through my own needle’. And he called one of his servants, and said to him privately, ‘Go and bring me here a camel and a needle; find also a polluted woman, and force her to come here; for these men are sorcerers’. And Peter having learned the mystery through the Spirit, said to Onesiphorus, ‘Bring the camel, and the woman, and the needle. And when they brought them, Peter took the needle, and fixed it in the ground, while the woman was sitting on the camel. Then Peter said, ‘In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ the crucified, I order you, O camel, to go through this needle’. And immediately the eye of the needle was opened, and became like a gate, and the camel went through it’. Peter again said to the camel, ‘Go through it again, that all may see the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that some may believe on Him’. Then the camel again went through the needle. And Onesiphorus cried out, ‘Truly great is the God of Peter and Andrew, and from this time forth, I believe in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now then, hear my words, O Peter. I have grain fields, vineyards, and fields; I have also twenty-seven pounds of gold, and fifty pounds of silver; and I have very many slaves. I will give my possessions to the poor, that I also may do one miracle like you. And Peter was grieved lest the powers should not work in him, seeing that he had not received the seal in Christ. And while he was considering this, behold, a voice out of the heaven saying to him, ‘Do to him what he wishes, because I will accomplish for him what he desires. Peter says to him, ‘My son, come here; do as we do’. And Onesiphorus came up, and stood before the camel and the needle, and said, (Here the manuscript ends.)

Another account<sup>34</sup> of Matthias’ and Andrew’s work along the coast of the Black Sea reads as follows: “Andrew’s lot was Greece and the Balkans, including the River Danube. He spread the Gospel throughout Bithynia, the Propontis, Chalcedon, Byzantium, Thrace, Macedonia, as well as in Thessaly, Hellas, Achaia, Amisus, Trapezus, Heraclea, and Amastris. Andrew passed through these lands and cities, preaching the Christian Faith, and in each city he had to endure much affliction and pain; but, fortified by the omnipotent help of God, he joyfully bore all such tribulations for Christ's sake”.

“In Amisus, a city on the Eastern side of the Black Sea, and somewhat more than 76 miles from Sinope, the apostle found many Jews who were benighted by spiritual ignorance and impiety.

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<sup>34</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, *The Lives of the Holy Apostles*, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 53-57. This is a translation from the following:

*The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov*, Moscow, Synodal Press, 1911, v. 3, (November) pp. 631-651.

*The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church [in Greek]*, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, pub., Athens, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1979, v. XI, pp. 727-746.

Yet, despite this, the people of Amisus took delight in showing hospitality. They would receive all foreign travelers into their city and homes, and would minister to them as they were able. Thus, when Andrew entered Amisus, a certain Jew took him in. Andrew then gave thought to how he might convert such a multitude of people”.

“The following morning, the apostle went to the local synagogue, where they asked him pointedly who he was, why he had come among them, and what was his preaching. Andrew, expounding upon the teachings of our Savior, and of Moses and of the prophets, then demonstrated how Jesus is the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and that He would come to save mankind. Then the word of Christ, Who said, ‘I will make you fishers of men’ (Matthew 4:19), was fulfilled. The Jews listened to the words and teaching of Christ's Apostle and immediately repented, believed and were baptized. They brought to the apostle all their sick, and he healed all of whatever diseases afflicted them. Thus, Andrew became not only a physician of bodies, but one of souls as well. He erected a church in that place and ordained one of them to the priesthood”.

“From Amisus, he left for Trapezus, where he taught and baptized, and ordained priests. This he also did in Laziki, where countless Greeks and Jews were brought to Christ. Then, he resolved to go to Jerusalem, not only because the feast of the Passover was approaching, but also because he desired to see his brother Peter. And he was also greatly desirous to see the Apostle Paul, whom he had heard was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, he returned to Ephesus with the Apostle John, whose lot it was to labor in that city”. John’s lot was Ephesus and the surrounding country, but John was only there for a short time with the Virgin Mary as they sought to escape the persecution from King Herod (Acts 12), which began in c. 44 AD. When Herod died, John and the Virgin Mary returned to Jerusalem and stayed there until her death in c. 55 AD.

“When Andrew reached Ephesus, he received a revelation from God instructing him to go and preach the Gospel in Bithynia. Immediately, he departed and entered the city of Nicea, where he saw many Greeks and Jews, and taught and performed miracles. And they came to believe on Christ. He healed many sicknesses instantaneously; and with his iron staff, which bore upon it the emblem of the Cross, he drove away some of the wild beasts which preyed upon men, and slew others of that kind. Moreover, he destroyed the foundations of the pagan temples of the false deities Aphrodite and Artemis<sup>35</sup>”.

“Those Greeks who resisted the Apostle's teaching became possessed by evil spirits, which entered into them and tormented them as just retribution for their obstinacy and unbelief; and so vexed were they that they began to gnaw at their own bodies. Yet Andrew, the disciple of Him, Who had come to save sinners, took pity upon them and expelled the demons from them; and they came to believe and were baptized. The apostle stayed for two years in Nicea and ordained a priest for that city. He then passed on to Nicomedia, which was a populous city, and baptized Greeks there, before removing to Chalcedon, near the Propontus, Scoutari near Byzantium, and, finally, Neocastra, where many were converted and baptized. He also traveled to Pontoheraclea, and from there to Amastrida, a city of the province of Bithynia, and its environs. Having ordained priests there, he went to Sinope, a city of Pontus, where his brother Peter<sup>36</sup> came to see him. Indeed, to this day, the Christians of Sinope exhibit two marble thrones, which they maintain were the seats of these apostles. They also display an ancient, wonder-working icon of the Apostle Andrew”.

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<sup>35</sup> *Aphrodite* is the Greek goddess equivalent to the Phoenician *Astarte* and the Roman *Venus*. *Artemis* is the Greek goddess equivalent to the Roman *Diana*.

<sup>36</sup> Peter had been forced to leave Jerusalem in c. 44 AD due to the persecution of Herod (Acts 12:17). From that time on, Peter spent the rest of his life traveling about the world on his various missionary journeys. **Peter continued on through Bithynia visiting Amastris, Nicomedia and Nicea (among other places) strengthening the churches Andrew started.**

“Before the Apostle Andrew arrived, however, the Apostle Matthias went to Sinope. Yet as soon as he had begun preaching in that city, he was arrested and cast into prison. When Andrew arrived and heard that his colleague had been incarcerated, he prayed on his behalf, and instantly Matthias’ shackles fell off, the prison doors opened, and he emerged, free. Now, at that time Sinope was the habitation of a fierce and unbelieving people. When they saw that Andrew had violated the fastness of their prison, they surrounded him. Some spoke of burning down the house in which he abode, and others planned how they might take him. At last, they seized him by his hands and feet and pushing him they drove him down the road through the dirt, mercilessly beating him all the while. When they passed outside the city, they cast him onto a dung-heap, confident that he had expired from the beating. But the apostle endured all this abuse patiently, emulating His Master, Christ. The Lord did not permit His disciple to remain tortured and misused in this manner, but appeared to him that night. Exhorting him to be of good cheer, the Lord restored his broken bones, his broken teeth, and his cuts and bruises. And blessing him and telling him not to flag in his efforts to teach and convert the ungodly, the Savior disappeared”.

“The next morning, very early, Andrew entered Sinope again, in full health, his body unmarked by wounds or bruises, his countenance full of joy and gladness. The inhabitants of that place marveled greatly at his superhuman endurance and the great miracle, which Christ had wrought; for they had been convinced that he had died. But now, all saw that his wounds had disappeared during the night; and because of this, they repented and fell at Andrew's feet, begging forgiveness. Then Andrew and Matthias taught them the word of truth and baptized them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for they accepted the Christian Faith. At that time, Andrew also performed a great miracle. There was a woman present, whose only son had been slain by an enemy; and she fell down before the Apostle, confessing her belief in Christ with all her heart and soul. Moved to pity, Andrew raised up her child from the dead, that the newly converted might know the one true God. And when they beheld this, they were all converted”.

“Thereafter, Andrew and Matthias ordained priests and went on to visit Amisus and Trapezus a second time, baptizing those few remaining who had renounced their delusion. From there, they went on to Neocaesaria before passing on to Samosata, where many Greeks dwelt who thought they were the wisest men on earth. Notwithstanding, the all-wise preaching of the Apostle cut through the Hellenic reasoning of their orators as though it was a spider's web, exposing their deception; and they were persuaded both by his words and his miracles, and all repented and received baptism. Afterwards, Matthias and Andrew departed for Jerusalem to meet with the other apostles and to celebrate the Passover of the Christians”. This was in 48 AD when the Council of Jerusalem was convened to consider the issue of circumcision raised by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15).

### **Matthias Travels to Macedonia**

“After the feast of Pascha<sup>37</sup> in 48 AD, Matthias and Andrew, accompanied by the Apostle Thaddaeus, set out for the city of Chorassan, in the parts bordering Mesopotamia. Andrew, however, remained with them for but a few days, leaving them to preach in that region while he proceeded to the area East of the Black Sea, to the Alani and Abasgians. Thaddaeus stayed in the

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<sup>37</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, *The Lives of the Holy Apostles*, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 135-140. This is a translation from the following:

*The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov*, Moscow, Synodal Press, 1911, v. 12, (August) pp. 136-143.

*The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church [in Greek]*, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, pub., Athens, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 1979, v. XI, pp. 727-746.

area of Mesopotamia, which is where he began his missionary work in Edessa. Matthias eventually made his way to Macedonia.

The following is an account from a Russian language publication<sup>38</sup> that has recently been translated into English<sup>39</sup>.

“The ungodly Greeks in Macedonia desired to test the power of Matthias’ teaching and forced him to drink a poison that generates blindness. Not only did the poison not affect Matthias, but also he healed 250 blind men who had been similarly forced to drink the same poison”.

“The devil, unable to bear such reproach, appeared to the pagans in the guise of a young man, urging them to slay Matthias, since he was abolishing the worship of the gods. When they went to seize him, they searched fruitlessly for him for three days; for Matthias, although he walked in the midst of them, had become invisible to them. Afterwards, Matthias revealed himself to the pagans who were searching for him and voluntarily surrendered himself into their hands. Binding him, they imprisoned him in a dungeon, where there appeared to him demons, who gnashed their teeth at him in rage. But the following night, the Lord appeared to him in a great light; encouraging Matthias and freeing him from his fetters, He opened the doors of the prison and released him. When day broke, the apostle stood again among the people, preaching the name of Christ with yet greater fearlessness. When several hard-hearted persons, refusing to believe his preaching and moved to rage, went to strike him with their hands, the earth quaked suddenly and swallowed them up. Stricken with horror, those who remained accepted Christ and were baptized”.

The hymns of the Church celebrate Matthias’ work in Macedonia and Cappadocia as follows:

“As the Sun of righteousness<sup>40</sup>, Christ emitted you like a ray of light, to illumine the whole world, O glorious Apostle Matthias. In your supplications you are luminous and enlighten with the never-waning light of God all who celebrate your memory with faith”. “Casting down the pride of idolatry and desiring the sufferings of the Savior, O all-blessed Apostle Matthias, you revealed to the world by heaven, pouring forth miracles upon all, and became a teacher of the nations”.

“You were cast<sup>41</sup> into the world as divine salt, O blessed and all-praised Apostle Matthias, cleansing away the corruption of falsehood with sweet doctrines, driving away sickness and healing wounds of body and soul”.

### **Matthias Returns to Jerusalem for the Funeral of the Virgin Mary**

Matthias was busy on his missionary journeys in Macedonia just prior to the time of the death of the Virgin Mary in c. 55 AD. As Mary reached her mid 70’s, she was feeling the effects of old age. And it was then that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her to tell her that her departure was imminent<sup>42</sup>, and would occur in three days.

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<sup>38</sup> The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Moscow, Synodal Press, 1911, v. 12, (August) pp. 136-143.

<sup>39</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 135-140.

<sup>40</sup> “Sedalion for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>41</sup> “Ode VIII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>42</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, “The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary”, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v.8. Roberts and Donaldson, “The Passing of Mary”, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v.8.

Shortly after Gabriel left, the Apostle John was translated in a bright cloud from wherever he was at the time. This was similar to the way the Deacon Philip was translated from the desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza to Azotus (Acts 8:26, 39-40), and as Habakkuk the prophet carried food to Daniel, who was in the lions' den, and quickly returned to Judaea<sup>43</sup>. There is some disagreement among the Church Fathers as to whether John was in Ephesus or in some region of Judea. They contend that John did not leave the Virgin Mary alone during her lifetime, unless it was just briefly in the care of her stepson, James, the Lord's brother.

After John arrived<sup>44</sup>, "the rest of the Twelve arrived also from whatever part of the world where they were then preaching the Gospel. All of the Twelve arrived except Thomas. They stood and went in, and greeted the queen mother with the following words: 'Hail, Mary, full of grace! The Lord be with you' (Luke 1:28). And she eagerly rose quickly, and bowed herself, and kissed them, and gave thanks to God. And Peter answered and said to the apostles, 'Let us each, according to what the Holy Spirit announced and commanded us, give full information to the mother of our Lord'. And those who had come likewise agreed to give an account of how they had come. So each of the Twelve gave Mary an account of where they were when they were summoned". The account of where Matthias was at this time is not recorded.

"Then the blessed Mary said to her brethren: 'What is this, that you have all come to Jerusalem?' Peter, answering, said to her: 'We had need to ask this of you. Certainly, as I think, none of us knows why we have come here today with such rapidity. And they all wondered that they were there when they heard these things. The blessed Mary said to them: 'I asked my Son, before He endured the passion, that He and you should be at my death; and He granted me this gift. Whence you may know that my departure will be tomorrow'"

"After Mary's death the next day, the Apostles with great honor laid the body in a tomb on the Mount of Olives, then Thomas was suddenly brought to the Mount of Olives, like the others had been brought earlier. He saw Mary's body going up to heaven, and began to cry out to her. Then the girdle with which the Apostles had encircled her body was thrown down from heaven to the blessed Thomas. And taking it, and giving thanks to God, he came again into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, finding all the Apostles and a great crowd there. Then Thomas said, 'Where have you laid her body?' And they pointed out the sepulcher with their finger. And he said, 'The body is not there'. But they didn't believe Thomas. Then they went to the sepulcher, which was a new one hollowed out in the rock, and took up the stone; but they did not find the body, and did not know what to say. Then Thomas told them how he was singing mass in India — he still had on his sacerdotal robes. He, not knowing the word of God, had been brought to the Mount of Olives, and saw the body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed her to give him a blessing. She heard his prayer, and threw him her girdle, which she had about her. And the Apostles seeing the belt which they had put about her, glorified God, on account of the benediction which the blessed Mary had given him, and because he had seen her body going up into heaven. Then Thomas gave them his benediction, and said, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'"

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<sup>43</sup> Lancelot C. L. Brenton, "Bel and the Dragon 1:33-39", *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, Hendrickson, Peabody MA, 1990

<sup>44</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form", *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

“And the same cloud<sup>45</sup> by which they had been brought carried them back each to his own place. And so also the Apostles quickly returned to where they had at first been, to preach to the people of God”.

### **Matthias Returns to Judea and to Martyrdom**

After spending some more time in Macedonia, Matthias returned again to his lot, Judea, and converted many of the children of Israel to the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming to them the Word of God and confirming it with signs and wonders. This occurred shortly after the death of James, the Lord’s brother, who was martyred in c. 62 AD.

James had been confronting the Jewish leaders with what the Scriptures taught about his brother, Jesus, for over 30 years. He had been proclaiming the details of the Mosaic Law and the imagery of the Temple as testimony of its fulfillment by his brother. Finally the Jewish leaders couldn’t take it any longer, and threw him off the pinnacle of the Temple. And when that six-story fall didn’t kill him, one of them beat him to death with a club. Eusebius stated<sup>46</sup> that the siege of Jerusalem (c. 66-70 AD) occurred shortly thereafter due to the horrible way they treated James:

“These things are related at length by Hegesippus<sup>47</sup>, who is in agreement with Clement. James was so admirable a man and so celebrated among all for his justice, that the more sensible even of the Jews was of the opinion that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem. This happened to them immediately after his martyrdom for no other reason than their daring act against him”.

Eusebius also quoted Josephus<sup>48, 49</sup> as testifying the same thing: “These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus, that is called the Christ. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man”.

Thus, by returning to Judea after the death of James, Matthias was walking into a snake pit, and he knew it. Arriving in Judea, “Matthias restored sight to the blind<sup>50</sup>, hearing to the deaf, life to the dying. He raised up the lame, cleansed lepers and cast out demons. Calling Moses holy, and exhorting all to keep the Law given him by God on the tablets of stone, Matthias at the same time taught them to believe in Christ, Who had been prophesied by Moses himself in signs and prefigurations. This was foretold by the prophets, that Christ was sent by God the Father for the salvation of the world, and became incarnate of the Virgin Mary. Moreover Matthias interpreted all the prophecies concerning Christ as having already been fulfilled in the Messiah, Who had come”. Matthias is credited<sup>51</sup> with systematically teaching what the Scriptures mean in all the prophetic and allegorical passages.

“At that time, the high priest of the Jews was Annas, who hated Christ and blasphemed His name, a persecutor of the Christians, who commanded that the Apostle James, the brother of God,

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<sup>45</sup> Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Eusebius, Church History, II, xxiii, 1-20.

<sup>47</sup> These works of Hegesippus are lost; most of what we know about them come from Eusebius’ quotes

<sup>48</sup> This quote from Josephus is not in our copies of his Antiquities today. However Origen also quotes Josephus with the same statement in Contra Celsum I, 47. The prevailing opinion is that earlier copies of Josephus contained this statement but later copies (after the 4th Century) deleted it.

<sup>49</sup> Eusebius, Church History, II, xxiii, 1-20

<sup>50</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 135-140.

<sup>51</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 9.

be cast down from the pinnacle of the temple. When Matthias, going about Galilee, preached Christ the Son of God in the synagogues of those parts, the Jews, blinded by unbelief and malice, filled with great wrath, seized the Apostle and brought him to Jerusalem, to Annas. The high priest, having summoned the Sanhedrin and called the holy apostle to trial, turned to that assembly, which was bereft of conscience, saying. ‘All the world, and this assembly, knows what reproach our people have brought upon themselves and not of our own will, but through the corruption of a few who have departed from us and through the insatiable self-interest, or rather tyranny, of the Roman prefects. One ought not to even mention these introducers of new heresies who have deceived so many thousands of the people. You yourselves know how many of them have been slain by the Roman soldiers; thus perished deceivers and deceived alike, covering our race with ignominy! Such were the originators of the heresies: Judah the Galilean and Theudas the sorcerer (Acts 5:36-37); yet with their destruction the very memory of them was wiped out”’.

“‘But among all such heretics arose the chief heretic, Jesus of Nazareth. He called Himself the Son of God, and God, and many did He amaze with His sorcerous signs and wonders, drawing to Himself the hearts of men and preaching the abrogation of the Law; for which He was condemned by the Law He blasphemed. What is there to say? Do we not know that the Law was given to Moses by God Himself, that the patriarchs and the prophets kept it, to whom God gave the power to perform such miracles as Jesus was not able? Who does not know Moses to be a man who conversed with God as with a man? Who does not know Elijah, who was taken up into paradise on a fiery chariot? Who has not heard that the dead man who was thrown down upon the bones of Elisha was restored to life? And the other favorites of God performed great miracles, yet not one of them dared do such a thing as Jesus: to appropriate for himself the honor due to God and to institute a new Law! The prophets, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke, full of humility; but He uttered His own fabrications with pride and attained such a degree of insanity that he subjected the chief priests and princes to censorious reproach, and called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites. Did any of the prophets do the like? And for His pridefulness He met a fitting end, receiving retribution in accordance with His deeds. O that His memory had perished with Him, and that no one had resurrected His teaching, which had died with Him! It is particularly grievous that the temple of God, the holy city and the Laws of our fathers are enslaved to the Romans, and that there is no deliverer to feel sympathy and pain with us. They drag us before their tribunals, though we are innocent, and we must bear it. They hold us captive, and we give our tacit consent; they rob us, and we utter not a sound; and most grievous of all, the Galileans betray us into the hands of the Romans, shamelessly accusing us and our people of murdering Jesus, Whom they say was innocent. It would be better to destroy these few Galileans than have this holy place<sup>52</sup> and our whole people subjected to destruction by the Romans. Of two evils, if one cannot avoid both, it is best to choose the lesser, the more bearable. And this disciple of Jesus, who now stands before us, is worthy of death; but first let him reflect. We will not deprive him of time for reflection, for we desire not his destruction, but his correction. Let him choose one of two alternatives: either follow the Law given by God through Moses, and thereby preserve his life, or call himself a Christian, and die”’.

“In answer to this, Matthias, lifting up his hands, said: ‘Men and brethren! I do not wish to say much concerning the accusation, which you lodge against me. For me the name Christian is

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<sup>52</sup> This Jewish nationalism was extremely counter-productive. By their vicious persecution of the Christians, they were actually bringing down on themselves the very thing that they didn’t want to happen, namely the destruction of Jerusalem. As the High Priest, Annas could have gone into the Holy of Holies to consult the Lord on this matter, which the Law made provision for (Deuteronomy 1:17, 17:8-12). However, if the High Priest did this and didn’t like the answer, he would be bound by the Law to order his own execution.

not a crime, but glory. For the Lord Himself said through the Prophet that in the last days His 'servants shall be called by a new name' (Isaiah 65:15). The High Priest Annas cried out, 'Is it not a crime to consider the holy Law as nothing, not to honor God, and to listen to empty tales of sorceries?' 'If you will listen to me', replied Matthias, 'I will explain to you that the teaching proclaimed by us is not full of myths and sorcery, but the very truth borne witness to by the Law long ago'.

"When the high priest gave his consent, Matthias opened his mouth and began to interpret the Old Testament types and prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. He explained how God promised the forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to raise up such a Man from their seed, through Whom all the tribes of the earth would be blessed. Concerning Him, David also speaks in the words of his Psalm, 'In Him shall be blessed all the tribes of the earth, all the nations shall call Him blessed' (Psalm 71:17). He explained how the unburned bush prefigured the incarnation of Christ from the Virgin Mary, whom Isaiah foretold, saying, 'Behold, a Virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel' (Isaiah 7:14), that is to say, God with us. Moses also clearly proclaimed Christ, saying, 'The Lord your God shall raise up for you a Prophet of your brethren, like me; Him shall you hear' (Deuteronomy 18:15). He also foretold the voluntary sufferings of the Savior when, lifting up the serpent on the staff, of which Isaiah likewise spoke, saying, 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter' (Isaiah 53:7), and 'He was numbered among the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). And the Prophet Jonah, who issued forth unharmed from the belly of the sea monster (Jonah 2:1-11), prefigured the resurrection of the Lord on the third day".

"These extensive explanations of the Old Testament books which speak of Christ Jesus goaded Annas into such a rage that he was unable to restrain himself and said to Matthias, 'How dare you infringe upon the Law? Do you not know the well-known words of the Scriptures? 'If there arise among you a prophet, or one who dreams a dream, and he gives you a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass, which he spoke to you, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which you know not, that prophet, or that dreamer of a dream, shall die'" (Deuteronomy 13:1-2, 5).

"Matthias responded, 'He of Whom I speak is not only a prophet, but the Lord of the prophets! He is God, the Son of God, to which His miracles bear true witness! Wherefore, I believe in Him and hope to be unshaken in my confession of His Holy Name!' 'If they give you time for reflection, Will you repent?' asked the high priest. 'May I never fall away from the truth which I have already received', answered the Apostle. 'I believe with all my heart and openly confess that Jesus of Nazareth, Whom you rejected and gave over to death, is the Son of God, Who is of one essence and equally everlasting with the Father; and I am His servant".

"Then the high priest, stopping his ears and gnashing his teeth, cried out, 'He blasphemeth! He blasphemeth! Let him hear the Law!' And immediately the book of the Law was opened, and that passage was read wherein it is written, 'Whosoever shall curse God shall bear his sin. He that names the Name of the Lord, let him die the death; let all the congregation of Israel stone him with stones' (Leviticus 24:15-16). When this passage had been read, the high priest said to the apostle of Christ, 'Your words bear witness against you; your blood is on your own head!'"

"Then the high priest condemned Matthias to death by stoning; and they led the Apostle to execution. When they arrived at the place called Bethlaskila, that is, the house of those slain by stoning, Matthias said to the Jews who had brought him hither, 'You hypocrites! Rightly did the Prophet David speak of those like unto you, 'They shall hunt down the soul of the righteous man, and the innocent blood shall they condemn' (Psalm 93:21). The same also the Prophet Ezekiel said of such a race of men, that they will 'slay the souls which should not die' (Ezekiel 13:19). After the Apostle of Christ had uttered these words, two witnesses, as the Law demanded, placed their

hands upon his head and testified that he had blasphemed God, the Law and Moses; and they were the first to cast stones at Matthias. Matthias requested that the first two stones be buried with him, as witnesses to his sufferings for Christ. Afterwards, others also began to cast stones, striking the Apostle; and lifting up his hands, he surrendered his spirit into the hands of his Lord. Then the iniquitous Jews added another insult to his torment; after the death of the martyr, to please the Romans, they beheaded him with a sword, as though the Apostle of Christ had been an opponent of Caesar. Thus, having fought the good fight, the Apostle Matthias finished his course. The faithful, taking up the body of the Apostle, committed it to burial, sending up glorification to our Lord Jesus Christ”.

The hymns of the Church celebrate Matthias’ work in Macedonia as follows:

“Every prophecy<sup>53</sup> of the sacred prophets is contained in you, the disciple. For you were an eye-witness, emulator and Apostle of Him Whom you proclaimed of old, O Matthias, servant of God”.

“With the flood<sup>54</sup> of your divine wisdom you dried up the torrent of falsehood, O glorious one, and with a torrent of sustenance gave drink to those who cry with faith. Blessed are You, O God”.

“You showed yourself<sup>55</sup> to be the heaven of the Word, declaring the ineffably divine glory of the the Only-begotten, O most wise Matthias. You are a lightning-flash of grace, seeker of the lost, lampstand of the divine Light, initiate of ineffable mysteries, whom we hymn together with gladness”.

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<sup>53</sup> “Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>54</sup> “Ode VII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>55</sup> “Ode VIII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Matthias, August 9<sup>th</sup>”, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.